

## Naval War College Review

---

Volume 30  
Number 2 *Spring*

Article 9

---

1977

# Set & Drift: A Contemporary Political Dilemma: The Impact of Intelligence Operations on Foreign Policy

James T. Westwood  
*U.S. Navy*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review>

---

### Recommended Citation

Westwood, James T. (1977) "Set & Drift: A Contemporary Political Dilemma: The Impact of Intelligence Operations on Foreign Policy," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 30 : No. 2 , Article 9.  
Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol30/iss2/9>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Naval War College Review by an authorized editor of U.S. Naval War College Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu](mailto:repository.inquiries@usnwc.edu).

## 86 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

### A CONTEMPORARY POLITICAL DILEMMA: THE IMPACT OF INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS ON FOREIGN POLICY

by

Lieutenant Commander James T. Westwood, U.S. Navy

Intelligence operations fall into three broad categories: (1) those by which "raw" data are collected, processed into "finished" information, and disseminated; (2) those conducted to counter-intelligence operations, of whatever kind, of rivals; and (3) those intelligence operations undertaken to influence the course of events, sometimes called clandestine or covert operations. All three kinds of intelligence operations will have an impact on foreign policy. This impact will vary in both scope and degree, because it is policy which gives rise to intelligence operations.

In the affairs of politically organized mankind, there is a ladder of actions which commences with variegated, often amorphous qualities that have come to be called *national interests*. In turn, the element of policy gives a certain form and direction to national interests, and from policy comes a scheme or plan of action which is strategy. Strategy, in its turn, is implemented by one or more tactics. Thus, intelligence operations are really tactics. There is little or nothing in this view that is mysterious and even less, if anything, that is unreasonable. Where there is no policy, there hardly will be any strategy—or tactics. Where policy is large and encompassing, it must naturally be expected that intelligence operations will occur. That these operations exist and flourish will not be a secret. Indeed, it will be a matter of the widest public awareness. Only certain sources, certain detailed methods, and the degrees of relative success, it is to be hoped and expected, will be secret.

William E. Colby, the former Director of Central Intelligence, has said that intelligence will not work if exposed. He is quite correct. Exposures and exposes which reveal sources, methods, and degrees of accomplishment are fundamentally damaging in the long term and are critically detrimental to states' interests and policies. That is why such acts are forbidden by and severely punishable under law. One marvels at any group or individual who seriously supposes that a state and its leadership will forego an opportunity to further what it regards to be its interests or, generally, hesitate to defend those interests and policies. After all, men organize collectively for protection against common enemies and for the promotion of a concept of their welfare, i.e., the furtherance of their interests. In so doing they elaborate policies to promote their interests. Intelligence operations of all types are essential and integral to this process, and it is nothing short of amazing that governments, their critics, and their populations at large regularly lose sight of these fundamental conditions and premises. To argue that intelligence operations can be abrogated or suspended is tantamount to expecting that men, organized for political and social purposes have no interests. Intelligence operations are as old as organized man and as new as the most current demands made on them. Though sometimes seemingly independent, they fall closely in line with the patterns of behavior and the values of peoples and their governments.

The contemporary confusion that

surrounds U.S. and other Western intelligence operations in the wake of the Indochina wars and the Watergate conspiracy has its origins in contrasting perceptions of what constitutes U.S. national interests and, accordingly, what the policies to further those interests should be, provided the underlying interests themselves are understood. This problem is not, at its heart, as much a difference over the nature of intelligence operations themselves, though that is what it is widely perceived to be, as it is a matter of difference over what are the U.S. national interests and who is empowered to define them. Democratic states encourage and promote expressed differences, although they generally subscribe to the premise that the majority's will and satisfaction of its wants shall predominate. Americans accept this as a fundamental premise and have institutionalized it. By nature, the governments of democracies are so constituted that more than one body or institution may define and implement national interests, i.e., shape policy. Complicating this situation is the fact that within those bodies, whether legislative, judicial, or executive, there exist varied foci of differing interpretations and emphases as to the expression and the formulation of national interests.

British historian A.J.P. Taylor has remarked that democracies make up their minds slowly, haltingly, and sometimes wrongly. There can be no doubt of this in a system of government in which no one authority defines national interests and sets national policies. One does not have to agree with Taylor to appreciate how both differing and changing perceptions and policies in the same state, and among allies, may work at cross-purposes and lead to distorted impressions of events and motives.<sup>1</sup> It is an understanding of potential pitfalls which leads to the so-called "art of compromise" in hope that a coherent policy will emerge. In any given period of U.S. history or even in a single year,

it is possible to collect a wide range of statements issued by a variety of public officials and private commentators on what is in the national interest. If such a collection is studied in the aggregate, only the most imaginative and perceptive observers can explicate an unbroken line of commonality in the statements and, to a large extent, that line merely will reflect the diverse nature of the democratic process of government and the heterogeneous nature of both the governors and the governed.

Accordingly, it may seem far-fetched to blame intelligence operations by themselves for producing a negative impact on policy. If every intelligence officer resigned over every issue of national interest, policy, and strategy to which the officer objected, there would be scarcely any continuity in a business which requires a high degree of clear-headedness and an unbroken evolution of decisive study and actions. This is not to say that intelligence personnel are blameless by virtue of merely carrying out orders. History is replete with examples of excesses brought about by intelligence officials believing that they can and must define national interests and formulate correct policies.

Among the most perfidious of such excesses is the involvement of the Chief of Royal Serbian Military Intelligence, Lt. Col. Dragutin Dimitrijevic, who plotted and brought about the assassination on 28 June 1914 of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir apparent to the Austro-Hungarian throne. This assassination was the direct result of extreme intelligence "operational" measures, and had it not occurred, it is entirely likely that some other event would have ignited World War I. Nevertheless, this act is one of the most compelling examples of what can happen from the unrestricted operations of intelligence officials who set about to make and effect their own national policies. The effects on broader policies can be disastrous, and these effects

## 88 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

result from confusing tactical actions with prior policy processes and from misunderstanding relative roles and priorities.

The story of Dimitrijevic, called Apis ("the Bee"), is a fascinating one. At age 37 in 1914, he had had a brilliant career, having been appointed to the post of G2 of the Serbian General Staff. He was a jingoist, an extreme nationalist, and was the prime mover of the notorious Black Hand elite terrorist group. It is of more than passing interest to note that Dimitrijevic enjoyed a close relationship with one Col. Victor Artamonov, then the Russian military attaché in Belgrade. Through Artamonov, the Russians had been financing Dimitrijevic's network inside Austria. In return, Dimitrijevic shared information with the Russians. Dimitrijevic appears not to have thought that the Austrians would declare war over the assassination, but, to be on the safe side, he was guaranteed by St. Petersburg, through Artamonov, that Russia would come to Serbia's defense should Austria-Hungary seek revenge through war. Dimitrijevic was best at intrigue, violence, sabotage, conspiracy, and revolution and that, while brilliant, he knew little about the world beyond Serbian borders and had little appreciation for political feasibilities.<sup>2</sup> The impact which Dimitrijevic's intelligence "operation" had on the foreign policy of Serbia, Austria-Hungary, Germany, Europe, and the world is so manifest, and persistent, that to elaborate it here is unnecessary.

A perceptive observer, Sherman Kent, has carefully examined the relationship of intelligence of policy in *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy*, in which he discusses both the blurring between intelligence operations and policymaking and the need for clear distinctions between the two. He argues that intelligence must not formulate policy and that "it is not the carrier out of operations."<sup>3</sup> He states, "Intelligence's role is definite and simple. Its

job might be described in two states: (1) the exhaustive examination of the situation for which policy is required, and (2) the objective and impartial exploration of all the alternative solutions which the policy problem offers."<sup>4</sup>

Kent argues against including in intelligence operations anything that would influence the course and outcome of events. He appears to be strictly opposed to intelligence operations in the sense in which they are widely understood. On closer examination, however, he does not rule them out as a tactic of statecraft. He merely does not want covert operations confused with intelligence.

Covert operations of one government which aim to influence events in other states are no less an historic part of international relations than are the more traditional and open aspects of intelligence. Both exist to support and serve policy. In the extreme they become dangerous and tend to subvert the policies which they were conceived to promote, but, if competently managed and soundly conceived, all intelligence operations serve the aims of policy.

Covert operations have the singularly distinct advantage of carrying out policy without placing national honor on the line. Regardless of their nature, if they fail, they do not leave the taste of defeat in war. For several centuries, Great Britain survived and flourished and a large part of this success was based on what Americans would regard as covert, if not also somewhat shadowy, intelligence operations. We often look to our British heritage with great pride, revering the British as masters of statecraft. The British controlled the Middle East for decades through the services of such now legendary figures as Thomas Edward Lawrence, a gifted Oxford student of modern history and archaeology and the famed Wingate Pasha of Egypt and Sudan, Gen. F. Reginald Wingate, whose eldest son, Lt. Col. Ronald E.L.

Wingate, figured prominently in covert operations during World War II.<sup>5</sup> A recent article in a U.S. military intelligence journal on Lawrence and the Arab Bureau, of which he was a member while serving throughout both peace and war as a commissioned officer in the Royal Army Intelligence, notes that "The Arab Bureau soon came to manage considerable influence over British policy in the Middle East."<sup>6</sup> The story of T.E. Lawrence and his colleagues, a rather well-known illustration of the impact of intelligence operations on policy, is merely one among a host of lesser known examples. They show that covert operations are very much part of the real world.

In his recent work, *KGB—The Secret Works of Secret Agents*, John Barron elucidates, at length, the extent and nature of Soviet covert intelligence operations which implement Soviet policies. It can be argued that Barron's examples are carefully selected to cast Soviet policies in the worst possible light, but it is difficult to deny that the Soviet Union maintains a huge apparatus for influencing events worldwide in opposition to Western governments, Western political values and Western national interests and policies. Western intelligence operations at their very worst have never shown anything like the destructive and demeaning propensities of the operations of the KGB and its predecessor organizations in subverting the many to the few.<sup>7</sup>

"The burgeoning of the national intelligence community, in size and importance of function, has left unresolved the question of who should oversee the intelligence community, particularly the far-flung operations of CIA." Although they sound like a recent comment, Harry Howe Ransom wrote them in 1958.<sup>8</sup> Two factors must be addressed in considering this question: (1) the particular political system which defines U.S. national interests and within which U.S. national policy is

made; and (2) the blurring of the distinction between peace and war.

The second factor is founded on a Clausewitzian dictum to which both the democracies and the Soviet Union subscribe.<sup>9</sup> Clausewitz' theories underly the strategy of flexible response: that open warfare is not the only solution to international problems and that there are many gradients of action other than declared warfare. By claiming Clausewitz on both sides of the Iron Curtain, we can accept a common mentor. Both the United States and the Soviet Union, at the head of their respective alliances, pronounce the intransigence of the other in a state of cold but nevertheless real "war." Consequently, all is indeed fair in war, and the actions of one side necessitate counteraction by the other side. Conveniently, because a legal state of war has not been declared, diplomatic relations can be continued along with international trade. Such a relationship is neither evil nor unusual. It has existed in many forms throughout history. Nevertheless, it creates a massive problem for policy, and consequently for intelligence. The whole range of intelligence operations is placed in a difficult position that can easily lead to policy subverting intelligence by tending to suppress the truths that intelligence seeks in support of policy. In 1947, Allen Dulles wrote in a memorandum to the Congress that "intelligence work in time of peace differs fundamentally from that in times of war."<sup>10</sup>

At the risk of seeming to take issue with Clausewitz, it must be emphasized that 30 years ago, Dulles drew a demanding distinction—a distinction lost sight of in the interval between 1947 and 1977. In time of war the requirements of national survival, the most basic of all national interests, will demand intelligence operations which no condition of an uneasy peace can be found to justify. In asserting that a state of undeclared war exists between

## 90 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

communism and democracy, ideology is converted into a *raison d'être* which it is ill-prepared and poorly constituted to practice. To the extent that democracies practice the methods of totalitarianism, they damage their basic fabric and thereby ultimately make themselves more susceptible to totalitarian advances.

In the United States this problem for intelligence is rooted in method by which the American government makes policy. However, its current dimensions are of reasonably recent origin. Harry Rositzke, a senior retired CIA officer explains:

When, in 1948, spurred by the Communist takeover in Czechoslovakia and the Italian political crisis, the National Security Council gave the CIA the responsibility for "political, psychological, economic, and unconventional warfare operations," the straightforward espionage mission of the AIS [American Intelligence Service] was enormously broadened, if not distorted.<sup>11</sup>

The rationale for this broad charter was overpowering in its simplicity: retard the growth of Soviet and all other Communist influence. The cold war was accepted as a fact of international life. Russia was widely thought to be militarily and politically poised to overrun much of Europe, the Near East and Asia. Having fought two gigantic wars in less than a century, the government was extremely anxious for an inclusive, all-round settlement and the Executive Branch therefore was not reluctant to provide initiatives for its new secret intelligence arm. Two years later, the State and Defense Departments, under Presidential instruction, produced a landmark American policy and strategy statement in NSC-68, the text of which was published in the *Naval War College Review*, May-June 1975. Its prescription was to prevent the Soviet Union from achieving predominance by giving the

United States superior military power aimed specifically at deterring rather than fighting war while still achieving the national policy objectives of the United States. It contained the outlines of a strategy which recognized the national interests and chief foreign policies at that time. Covert intelligence operations were clearly a preferred alternative to the employment of military forces with the concomitant danger of an atomic exchange.

As time wore on, however, successive Presidents found continuing use for the clandestine service, and the Departments of State, Defense, Treasury, Commerce, and Justice found several opportunities for getting certain of their policies implemented without the necessity of an all-or-nothing stand. The growing impact on policy of the lumping together of clandestine operations with the more obvious and military-like operations was ignored. Senior intelligence officers and their subordinates found it increasingly difficult to be all things to all people. National policies, never entirely coherent, became more widely disparate, which was the natural product of plural and sometime contradicting centers of their genesis, formulation, and expression. Intelligence agencies grew in number, complexity, and size in an effort to match growing policy, strategic, and tactical requirements.

The American intelligence community did not grow on its own in the period from 1950 to 1970. Under Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson it did not run away with policy; policy ran ahead of it. It attempted a herculean undertaking which if the powers of democratic governments, the Catholic Church, and Islam, had they all acted in concert, could not have accomplished: stopping communism. It was all based on the greatest lesson of modern history—or so it was thought to be—the lesson of Munich: Totalitarianism cannot be appeased; it must be actively fought and stopped.

Thus far, this policy has known only limited success. Communism has been retarded but not stopped. Southeast Asia developed into the ultimate and bitter expression of this truth. It was the dominant focus of extensive policies which, from the earliest period, were increasingly diversified and uncoordinated.<sup>12</sup> Intelligence operations did not fail. Rather policy overreached itself. Short of unrestricted warfare, it is extremely doubtful that communism can be stopped. Even with the overt use of military power, stopping it, *per se*, is by no means certain. It is simply not a reasonably expressed policy, and never has been. To defeat communism and stop its spread, it has always been necessary to treat its causes: poverty, ignorance, colonialism, distrust, disease, extreme hunger, and the surge of revolution and nationalism. Until these causes are adequately addressed through and by coherent and consistent policy, no amount of clandestine, paramilitary, or military operations will stop communism, which began with violent revolution and continues in that vein.

Returning for a moment to Rositzke, what he in essence stresses is that in the U.S. system of government there is no separate, distinct, and tightly controlled intelligence organization with singular responsibility for political actions that are taken apart from the much greater portion of conventional intelligence—an organization somewhat in the tradition of what is loosely called, in reference to the British experience, the SIS, or the "Secret Intelligence Service." Rositzke argues that intelligence operations in the narrow sense ought to be limited, highly coordinated, tightly controlled and performed by a small, select service distinct from but supported by conventional intelligence. He understands the compelling truth that modern warfare is potentially disastrous to the whole of mankind and that political warfare, or by whatever name so-called covert action proceeds, is

clearly a more preferred alternative in a less than perfect world. Importantly Rositzke's thesis recognizes the required distinction between peace and war as well as recognizing the realities of international affairs. It further recognizes that in a realized system where espionage is kept separate from other intelligence, the possibility that intelligence will be subverted to policy is drastically reduced thereby allowing an intelligence community to concentrate on unbiased estimates and on the straightforward production of intelligence information in fuller support of policy at all levels.

The period 1947 to 1951 was an important one for American policy and strategy. During those years policies and strategies were devised and set in motion which persist to this day. The strategy of deterrence was born during this period. In June 1948 the State Department first proposed the policy that the main strategic purpose of U.S. Armed Forces was not one directly involving combat but was rather one of deterring combat. This policy effectively became the basis of U.S. foreign policy, however sincerely the Soviets may have feared and may continue to fear U.S. aggression. This was a turn-about in U.S. policy and something of a revolution in strategy necessitated in part by the stark menace of atomic warfare. It was a policy which argued that war is not necessarily and inevitably the continuation of politics by other means, that in the words of Rear Adm. J.C. Wylie, USN, "War for a nonaggressor nation is actually a nearly complete collapse of policy. . . . When war comes, we at once move into a radically different world."<sup>13</sup> He understands that the evidence of history at once both invalidates and supports the universality of war.

U.S. policy since Vietnam gives some reason to believe that democracies have options other than war, options which can at least deal practically and successfully with communism and Soviet totali-

## 92 NAVAL WAR COLLEGE REVIEW

tarianism. Events in the Near East, in Africa, and in the Indian Ocean during 1975 and 1976 show what can be done if the several foci of policy coordinate their actions and concentrate on central strategic issues. One of those options is clearly the use of secret, espionage-type intelligence operations in the furtherance of policy, but, however organized,

such operations cannot succeed by themselves nor can they be effective if improperly or unwisely employed. If not closely coordinated, disciplined, and used only as required, intelligence operations will have a substantially deleterious effect on policy, and will chase their own tails prior to biting them off.

## NOTES

1. A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*, 2d ed., with a reply to critics (Greenwich: Fawcett Publications, 1961), p. xi. In his "Preface for the American Reader," Taylor notes national policy confusion. What he actually says is: "It is very hard for a democracy to make up its mind; and when it does so, often makes it up wrong."

2. Joachim Remak, *The Origins of World War I 1871-1914* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1967), pp. 97-111, and *Sarajevo* (New York: Criterion Books, 1959), pp. 43-57. Remak, of all historians of the period including Schmitt, has done perhaps the most detailed work on the assassination. The evidence is found largely in firsthand knowledge and in the record of the 1917 Salonica trial of the conspirators including Dimitrijevic. Remak says that Dimitrijevic "was quite possibly the foremost European expert in regicide of his time" (p. 50—*Sarajevo*). Remak is convinced that Dimitrijevic acted entirely on his own without the knowledge of the Serbian Prime Minister, Nicola Pasic.

3. Sherman Kent, *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1949), p. 182.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 201.

5. Anthony Cave Brown, *Bodyguard of Lies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), v. I, pp. 301-308.

6. Roy E. Smith, "Lawrence of Arabia," *MI Magazine*, Spring 1976, p. 37.

7. An excellent, detailed treatment of the history of Russian espionage organizations and their influence by and on policy may be found in Richard Deacon's *A History of the Russian Secret Service* (London: Frederick Muller, 1972).

8. Harry Howe Ransom, *Central Intelligence and National Security* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1958), p. 178.

9. Contemporary Soviet military writing refers frequently to Clausewitz. Chief among the works available in English is Marshal of the U.S.S.R. V.D. Sokolovsky, ed., *Military Strategy: Soviet Doctrine and Concepts* (New York: Praeger, 1963).

10. U.S. Congress, Senate Committee on Armed Services. *National Defense Establishment Hearings Before the Senate Committee on the Armed Services on S.758*, 80th Congress, 1st sess., 1947, pp. 525-528. (Reprinted as Appendix A in the Ransom book.)

11. Harry Rotsitzke, "America's Secret Operations: A Perspective," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1975, pp. 341-344.

12. Bernard B. Fall, "Reappraisal in Laos," *Current History* January 1962, p. 10. Were it not for the writings of Fall alone, we probably still would not understand what was really involved in Southeast Asia. In discussing the period from 1958 through 1961, Fall says of the Laotian condition: "It was during that crucial period that American policies clearly diverged according to the viewpoint of each agency involved. . . ."

13. J.C. Wylie, *Military Strategy: A General Theory of Power Control* cited by Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (New York: Macmillan, 1973), p. 476.

